

AAC&U
Annual
Meeting
2019

Documenting the Value of Higher Education with Student Engagement Data



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Our Plan Today

- Introduce prevailing narratives about college value
- Consider how student engagement can inform the value narrative
- Review the use of NSSE results as evidence of college value
 - NSSE core survey
 - Senior Transition Topical Module
 - Open-ended comments
- Illustrate approaches to telling the value story using NSSE results
- Detailed example: Eastern Connecticut State University
- Crafting a story

Views about the Value of Higher Education: *The Good*

3 of 4 Americans believe it's easier to be successful with a college degree than without, and that higher education is primarily a social good or both a social good and a private benefit

– Varying Degrees, New America's Annual Survey on Higher Education 2017



Views about the Value of Higher Education: *The Bad*



Employers question students' critical thinking skills, written and oral communication skills, and capacity to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings

– AAC&U Employer Survey and *Inside Higher Ed*

www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/02/23/study-students-believe-they-are-prepared-workplace-employers-disagree

Views about the Value of Higher Education: *The Missing*

#Views #Opinion

INSIDE
HIGHER ED

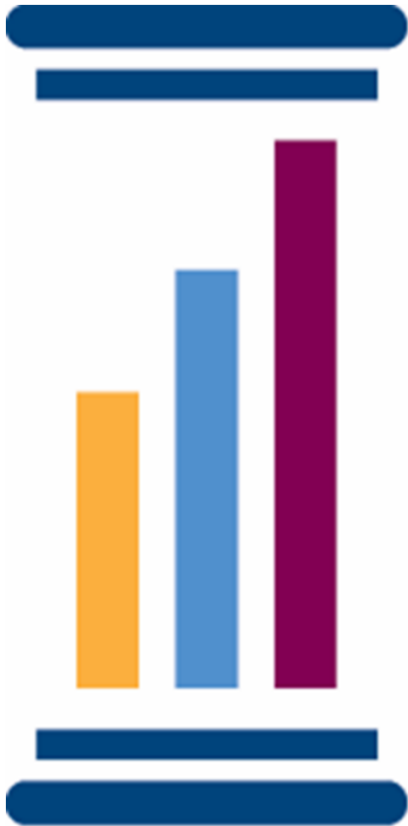
Improving the Quality of Education

By concentrating so heavily on graduation rates, policy makers are ignoring danger signs that the amount that students are learning in college may be declining, writes Derek Bok.

By **Derek Bok** // September 21, 2017

35 COMMENTS 

Crafting the College Value Narrative



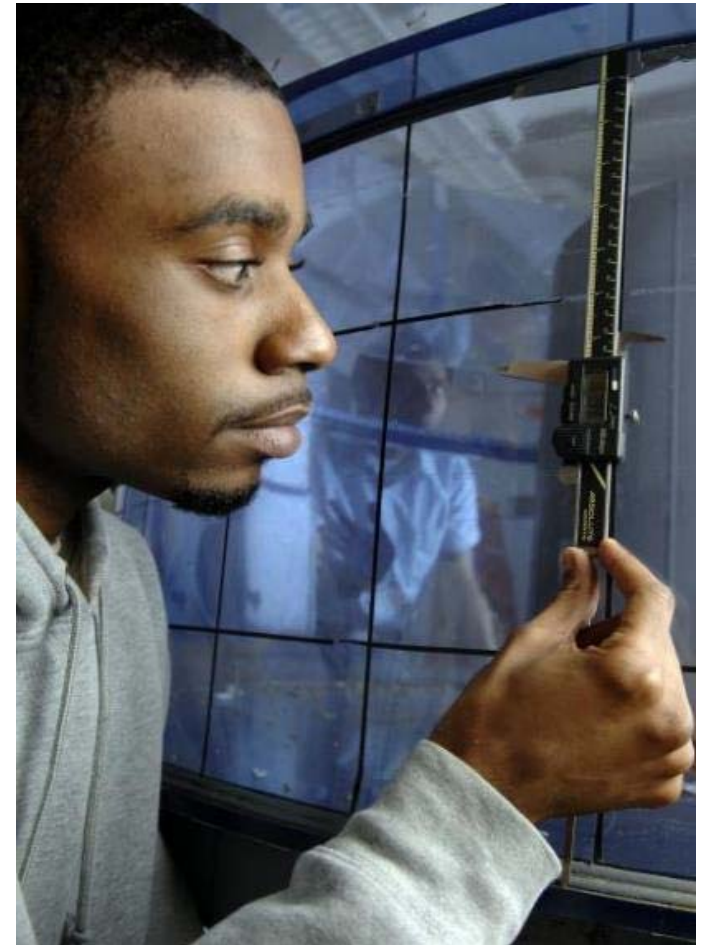
- We teach our students to back up their claims with evidence.
 - Do we back up our claims about college value?
- Telling the value story requires evidence about...
 - educational experiences that promote learning and development
 - specific knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that students gain from the undergraduate experience

Student Engagement and the Value Narrative

Student Engagement is...

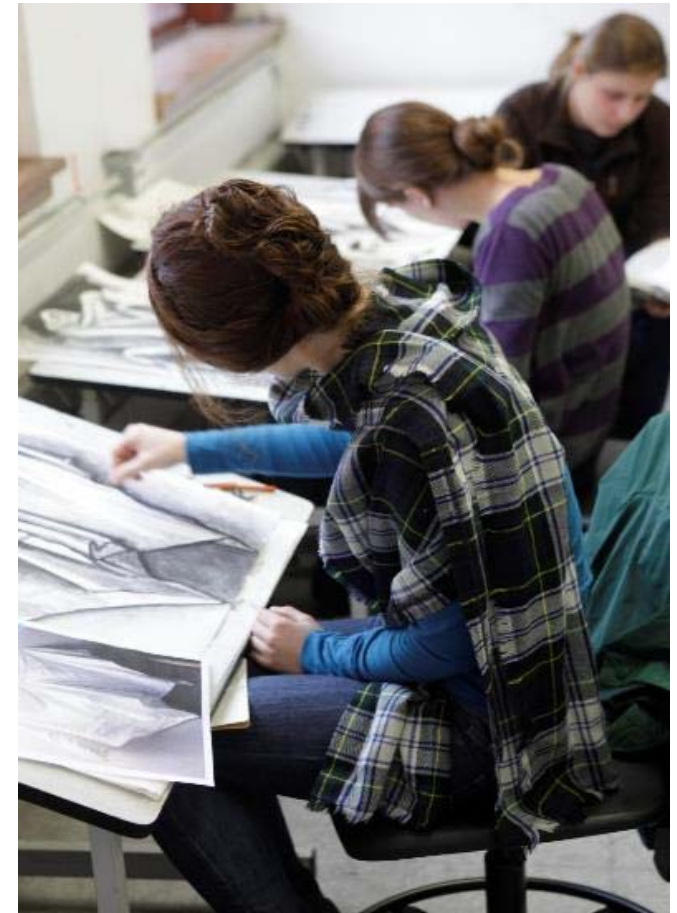
The extent to which students are exposed to and participate in effective educational practices

- Educationally purposeful activities and practices
- Empirically linked to desired outcomes



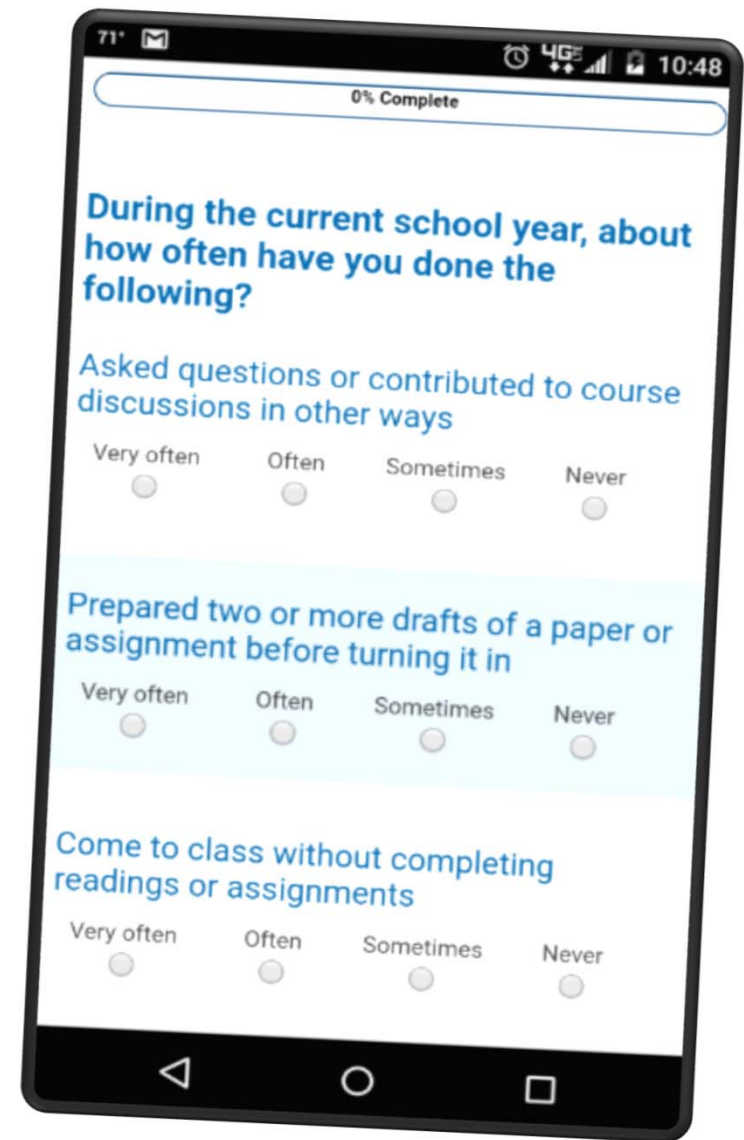
A Profoundly Different Approach to Assessing the College Experience

- From satisfaction (happiness) to *experiences that promote learning*
- Strong focus on *behavior* rather than attitudes and opinions





- Annual survey of first-year and senior students
- NSSE asks about the time and effort students devote to behaviors that are linked to learning and development



NSSE's Place in the College Value Discourse

- 20 years of “big picture” reporting
- Drawing on 500K students from 1,000+ institutions
- 2018 Annual Report on career preparation

As you view the next slides, think about what stands out for a story you want to tell – to whom?



NSSE's Place in the College Value Discourse

NSSE 2018 included experimental questions about student perceptions and experiences with career preparation administered at 38 institutions



NSSE's Place in the College Value Discourse

College Degree and Employability

93%

of seniors
believe that what
they are learning in
college is relevant
to their career paths

- Most seniors confident in their career & post-college plans
- Confidence positively related to conversations about career interests with professionals in the field, academic advisors, and family members

NSSE Evidence about Value (Example)

Tell a story of the experiences and gains of graduating seniors:

- Coursework emphasizes applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations
- Service-Learning
- Career-related experiences
- Educational Gains



NSSE 2018 U.S. Summary Frequencies
By Class and Sex

First-Year Students										Seniors						
Item wording or description	Variable name	Response options	Female				Male		Total		Female		Male		Total	
			Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?																
a. Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways	askquest	Never	2,781	4	1,254	4	4,135	4	2,218	3	1,503	3	3,721	3		
		Sometimes	30,109	36	13,233	34	43,342	35	23,616	25	12,564	26	36,180	25		
		Often	29,525	34	14,900	37	44,425	35	30,087	30	16,394	33	46,481	31		
		Very often	22,833	26	10,361	25	33,014	26	43,540	43	18,725	37	62,265	40		
		Total	85,268	100	39,648	100	124,916	100	99,461	100	49,186	100	148,647	100		
b. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	drafts	Never	13,324	16	7,041	18	20,365	17	19,621	20	11,236	23	30,857	21		
		Sometimes	29,049	34	14,604	37	43,653	35	34,651	34	18,093	37	52,744	35		
		Often	25,240	30	11,477	29	36,717	29	25,368	26	12,115	25	37,483	26		
		Very often	17,223	21	6,250	16	23,473	19	19,388	20	7,403	16	26,791	18		
		Total	84,836	100	39,372	100	124,208	100	99,028	100	48,847	100	147,875	100		
c. Come to class without completing readings or assignments	unprepared (reverse-coded version of unprepared created by NSSE.)	Very often	3,871	5	2,198	6	6,069	5	5,754	6	3,605	7	9,359	6		
		Often	10,230	12	5,721	15	15,951	13	13,767	14	8,037	16	21,804	15		
		Sometimes	47,087	55	22,198	56	69,285	55	52,635	52	25,604	52	78,239	52		
		Never	23,616	28	9,153	24	32,769	26	26,784	28	11,518	25	38,302	27		
		Total	84,804	100	39,270	100	124,074	100	98,940	100	48,764	100	147,704	100		

78% of seniors:
Courses emphasized*
applying facts, theories, or
methods to practical problems



*Percentage “Very much” or “Quite a bit”

62% of seniors:
At least some Service-
learning courses



49% of seniors:

Participated in an internship,
co-op, field experience, student
teaching, or clinical placement



23% of seniors:

Worked with a faculty member on
a research project

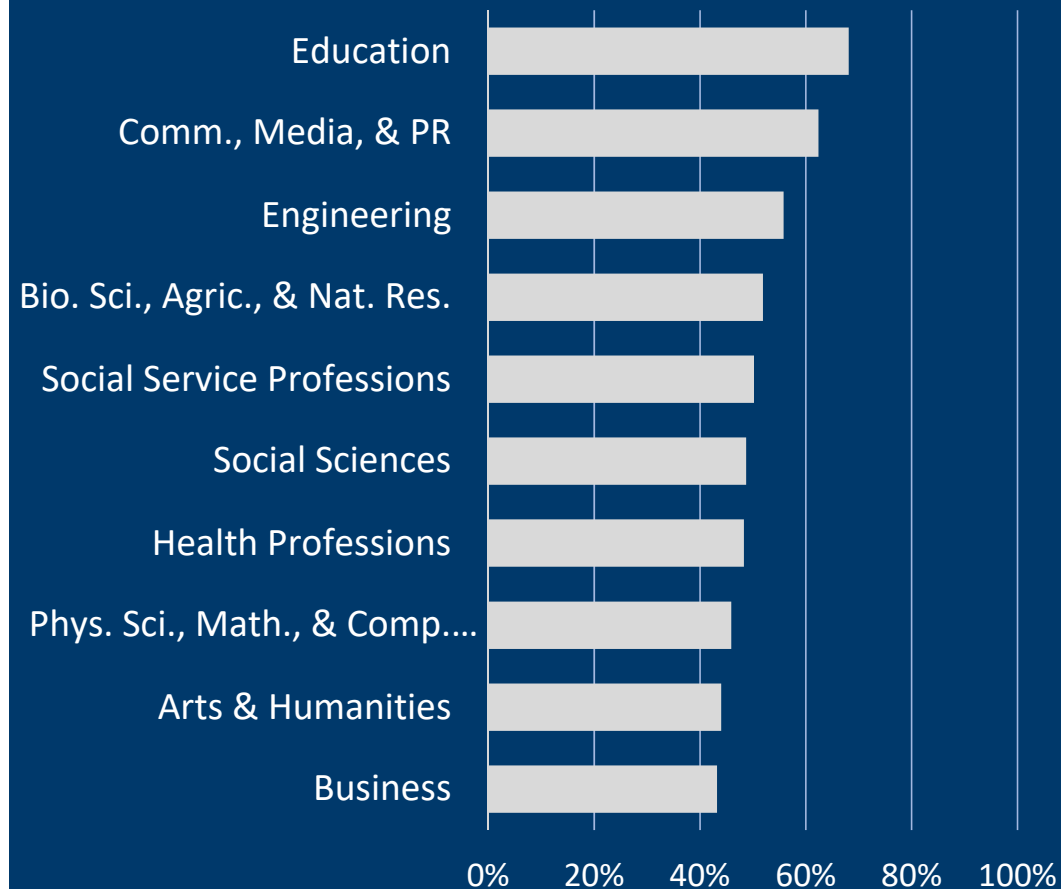


49% of seniors:

Participated in an internship,
co-op, field experience, student
teaching, or clinical placement



Internships by Related-Major Category

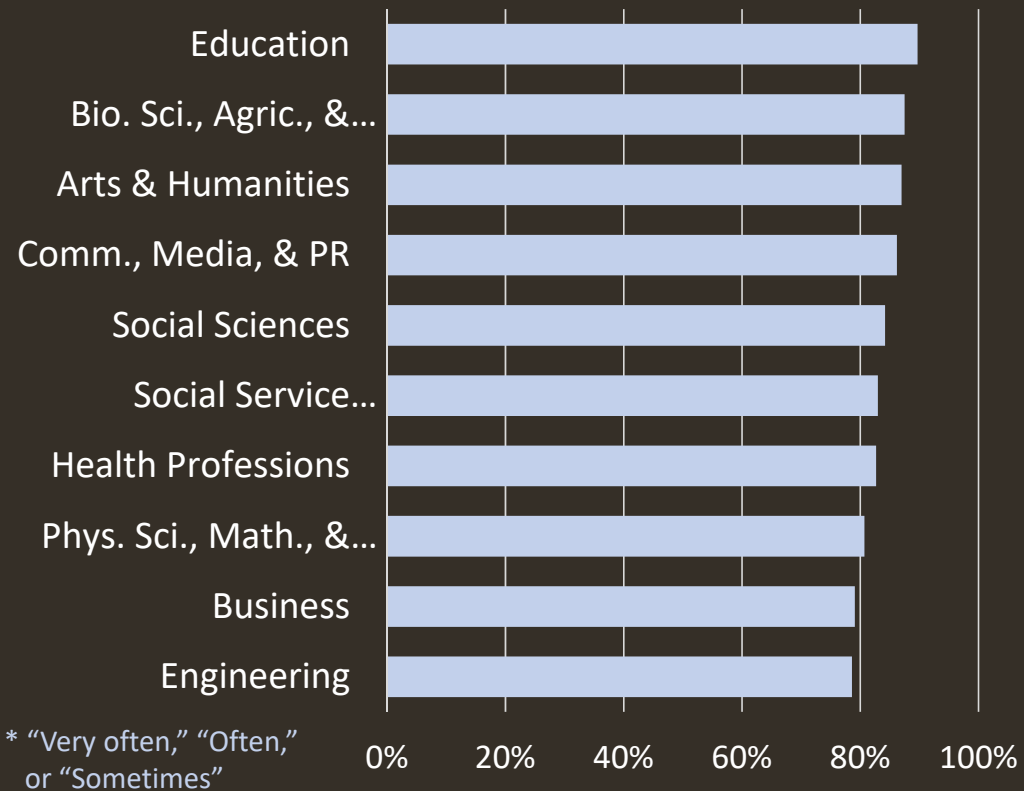


81% of seniors:

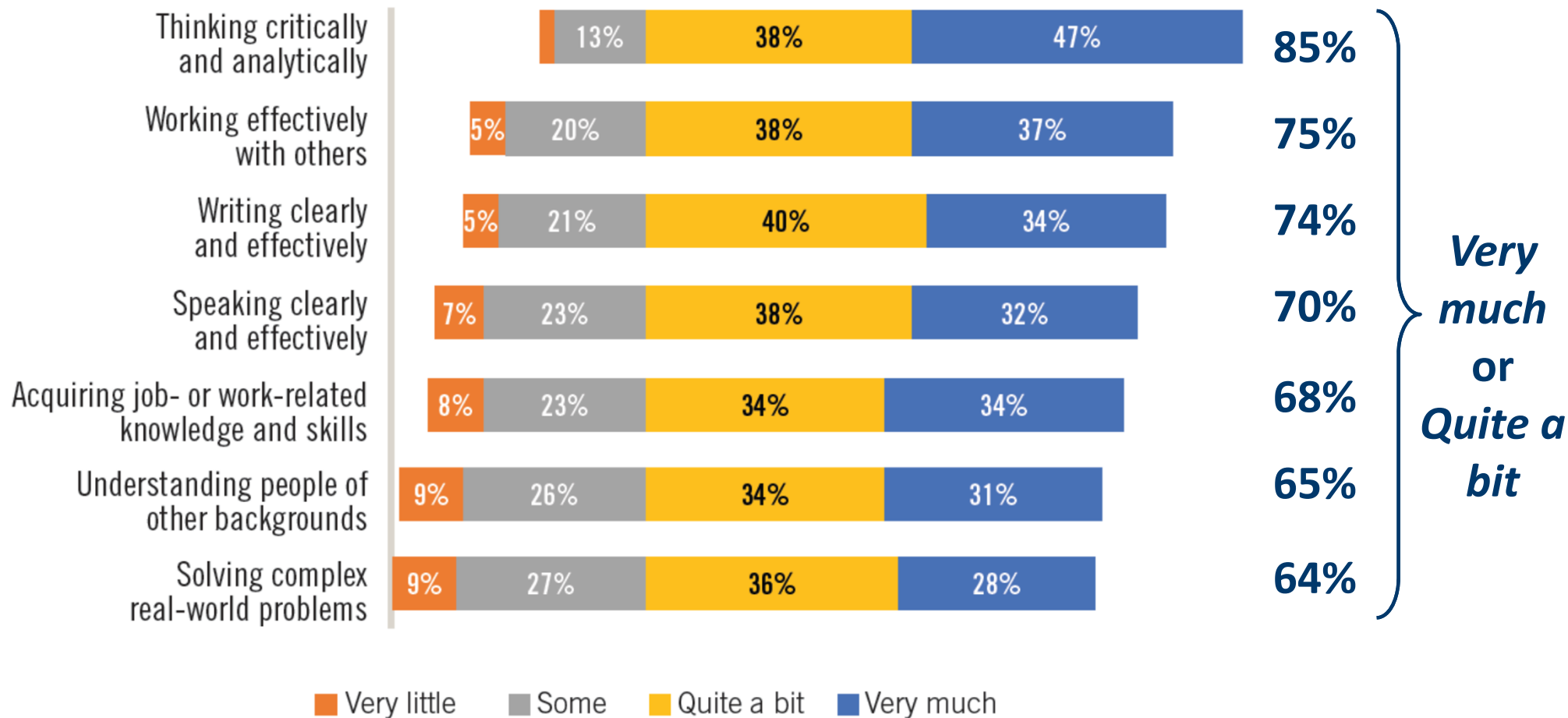
Discussed career plans with a
faculty member at least
“sometimes”



Discussing Career Plans by Related-Major Category



Perceived Institutional Contribution to Gains: Work-related skills (Seniors)



NSSE Module: First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions

Targeted questions for first-year students and seniors

- First-year items focus on academic perseverance, help-seeking behaviors, and institutional commitment
- Senior items explore post-graduation plans, links between the academic major and future plans, and confidence in skill development



Topical Module:
First-Year Experiences and Senior Transitions

SENIOR TRANSITIONS

1. Do you expect to graduate this spring or summer?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

1a. After graduation, what best describes your immediate plans?

- ☐ Full-time employment
- ☐ Part-time employment
- ☐ Graduate or professional school
- ☐ Military service
- ☐ Service or volunteer activity (AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, Teach for America, etc.)
- ☐ Internship (paid or unpaid)
- ☐ Travel or gap year
- ☐ No plans at this time
- ☐ Other, please specify: _____

[Only if "Full-time employment" or "Part-time employment" are selected:]

1b. Do you already have a job for after graduation?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes, I will start a new job
- ☐ Yes, I will continue in my current job

2. To what extent have courses in your major(s) prepared you for your post-graduation plans?

- ☐ Very much
- ☐ Quite a bit
- ☐ Some
- ☐ Very little

3. Do you intend to work eventually in a field related to your major(s)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

4. Do you plan to be self-employed, an independent contractor, or a freelance worker someday?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

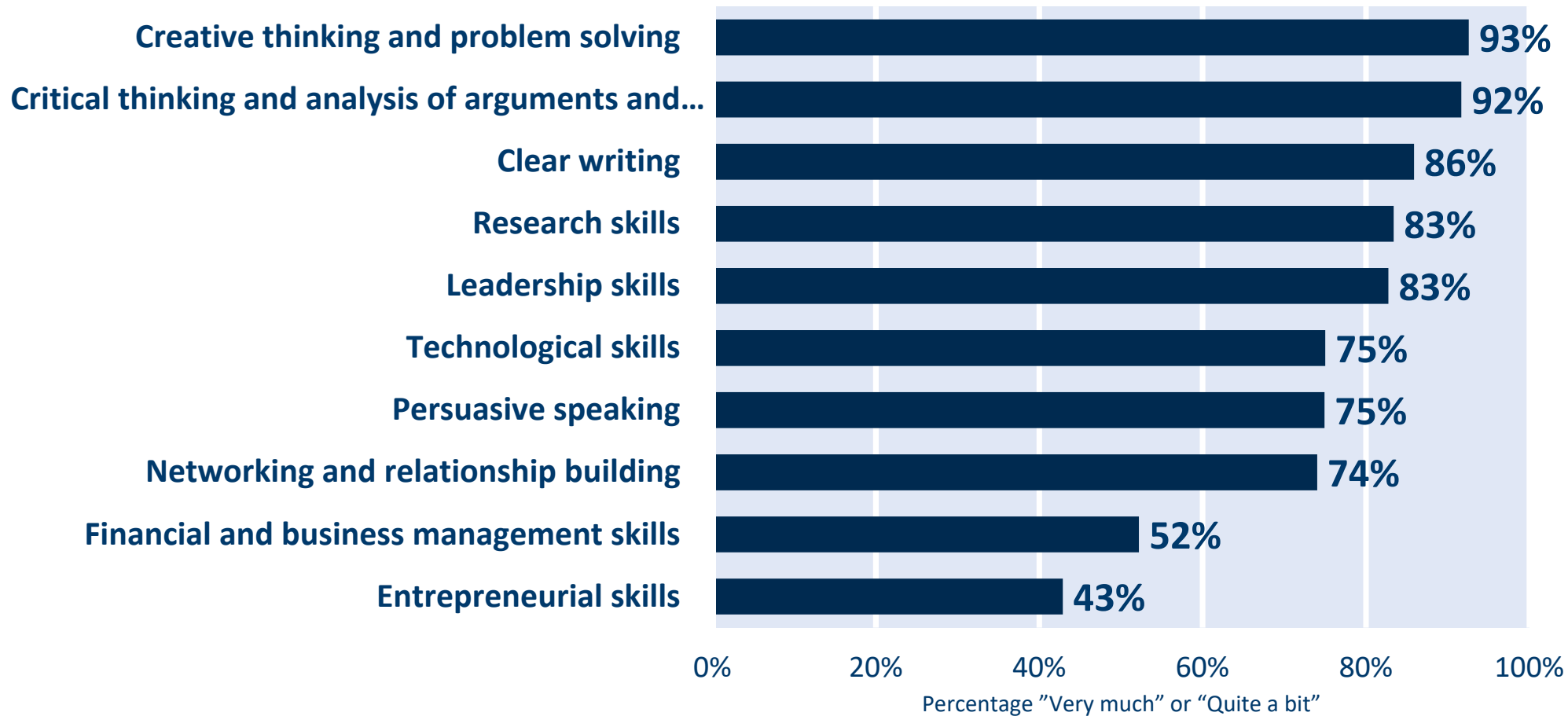
5. Do you plan to start your own business (nonprofit or for-profit) someday?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

6. How much confidence do you have in your ability to complete tasks requiring the following skills and abilities?

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little
a. Critical thinking and analysis of arguments and information	0	0	0	0
b. Creative thinking and problem solving	0	0	0	0
c. Research skills	0	0	0	0
d. Clear writing	0	0	0	0
e. Persuasive speaking	0	0	0	0
f. Technological skills	0	0	0	0
g. Financial and business management skills	0	0	0	0
h. Entrepreneurial skills	0	0	0	0
i. Leadership skills	0	0	0	0
j. Networking and relationship building	0	0	0	0

Seniors' Confidence in Career Abilities

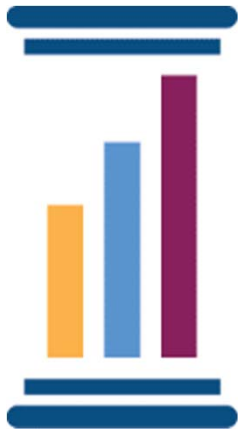


Considering NSSE & the Higher Education Value Story

- So, what's the story here?
What meaning do you make of these results?
- What else do you want to know about students' experiences?
- What evidence is important to whom?



How are institutions using NSSE results to tell their value story?



Approaches to Using NSSE in an Institution's College Value Story

- **Feature NSSE results aligned to mission**
- **Share senior results of educational gains and HIPs**
- **Share Senior Transitions module results by major or program to focus attention on post-college preparation and plans**
- **Complement statistics with authentic voices**



WESTMONT

Telling the Value Story with NSSE Data

Westmont is a place of academic rigor matched by a supportive, close-knit campus culture.

Demonstrating a liberal arts mission: To foster Westmont's blend of intellectual curiosity and social responsibility, the college draws students to a variety of forums and discussions beyond the classroom.

NSSE results reveal that Westmont seniors are more inclined than students from all NSSE institutions to “attend events that address important social, economic, or political issues” (71% vs. 46%)... Given the residential and global planks of Westmont's mission, it is notable that NSSE scores for “supportive environment” and “global study” place the college in the nation's upper 10%.

Telling the Value Story with NSSE Data



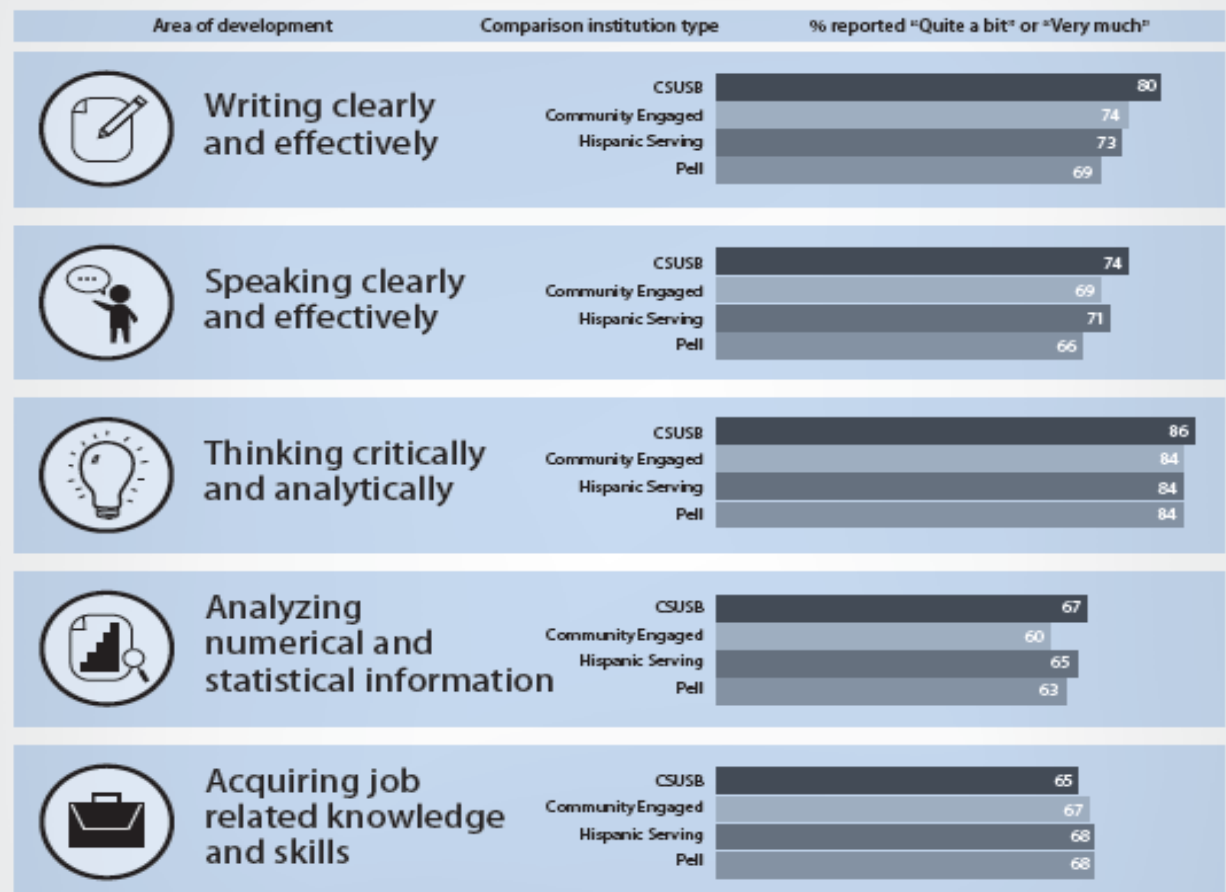
Did You Know

CSUSB promotes significant academic and personal growth?



—2014 National Survey of Student Engagement Respondents (1,068)—

Seniors reported how much their experience at CSUSB contributed to their development.



Telling the Value Story with NSSE Data



Did You Know

66% of CSUSB seniors have participated in High Impact Practices?

2011 & 2013 National Survey of Student Engagement Respondents (1,468)

High Impact Practices (HIPs) are:

Capstone Course,
Culminating Senior
Experience



45%

Internship,
Practicum, Field
Experience



37%

Foreign Language
or Additional
Language
Coursework



26%

Learning Community



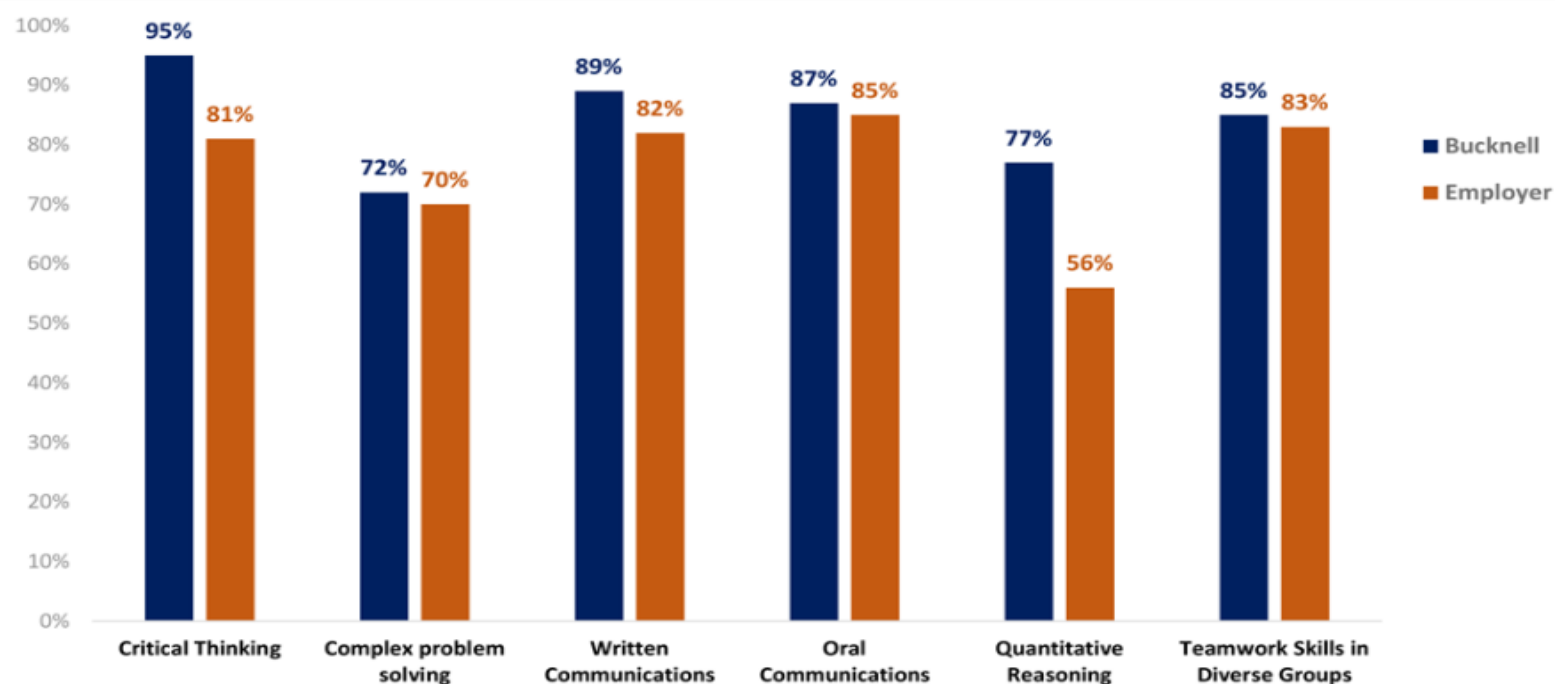
21%

Telling the Value Story with NSSE Data



Bucknell Educational Goals Compared to Employer Priorities

Bucknell seniors participating in the 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) said that their college experience substantially contributed to acquiring skills and knowledge. Compared to the 2015 Hart survey of employers, the results indicated that Bucknell's education meets or exceeds employer needs.



Telling the Value Story with NSSE Data

- “Transferable Skills and Career Services” report features career-related results from NSSE core survey and Development of Transferable Skills Topical Module
- Reports customized by 8 major fields disseminated to programs and faculty



NSSE 2017: Transferable Skills and Career Services

<https://apir.wisc.edu/students/nsse/>

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is a survey of college freshmen and seniors designed to assess student involvement in practices associated with high levels of learning. Results of the survey tell us what students think of their undergraduate experience, the kinds of activities in which they engage, and how they are benefiting from their studies.

About this report

The majority of this report focuses on questions from the 2017 NSSE “Transferable Skills” optional module, which includes questions that reflect on UW-Madison students’ preparation for the world of work. As this module was optional, the AAU peer group used for the core NSSE questions is not available. Any questions included in the transferable skills module will not include peer data as a result.

Any questions included in this summary that came from core NSSE questions will include AAU peer data. In this summary, differences between UW-Madison students and the peer group for the mean score on each question is noted as being different if the p value is greater than or equal to 0.05 *and* the effect size is greater than 0.10 or less than -0.10. Such cases are marked with an up (positive difference) or down (negative difference) pointing triangle in the attached data table.

Participation in career development activities

Telling the Value Story with NSSE Data

- **Demonstrates that UW-Madison students participate in career development activities at rates similar to peer institutions.**

<https://apir.wisc.edu/students/nsse/>



NSSE 2017: Transferable Skills and Career Services

<https://apir.wisc.edu/students/nsse/>

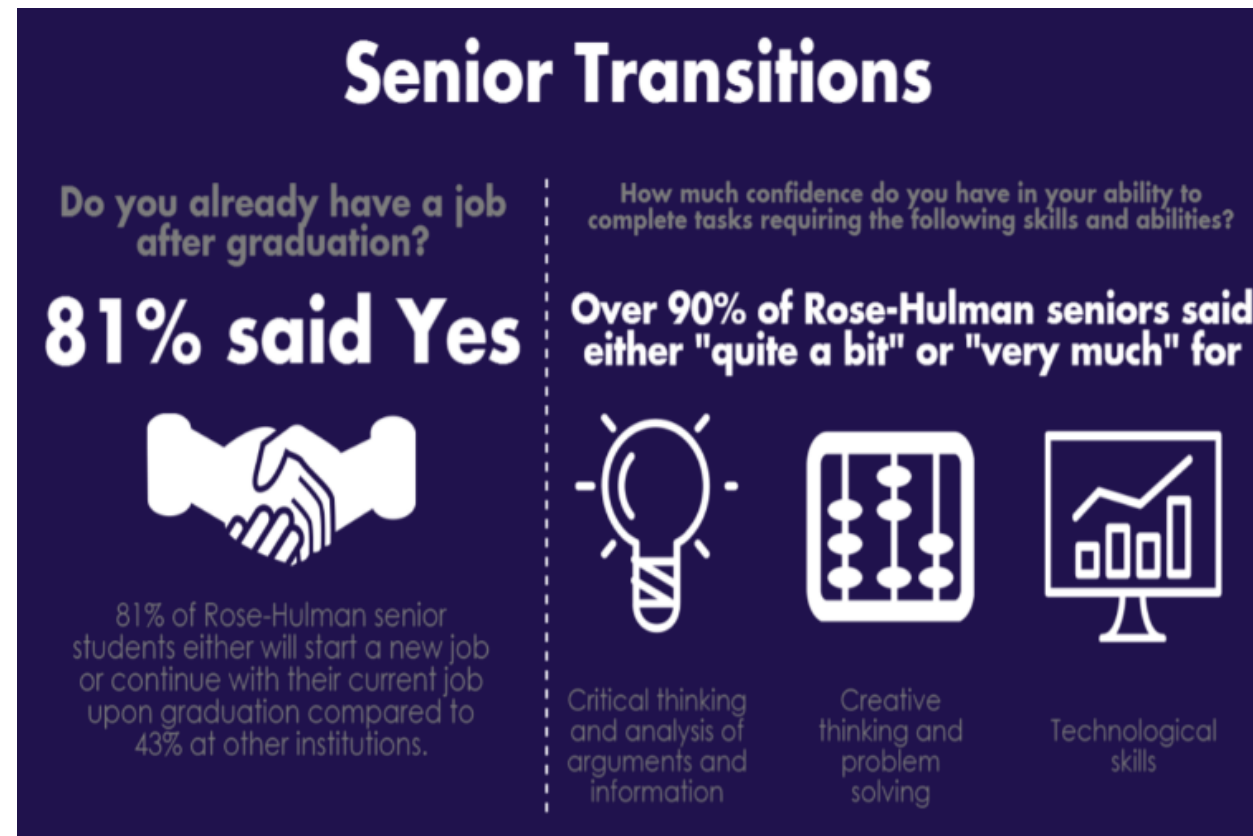
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- **Make a Case to Strengthen Career and On-Campus Work:** 50% of UW-Madison seniors work on-campus for pay -- on-campus work presents opportunities to incorporate skill-building activities related to career development into their student employment experience.

Telling the Value Story with NSSE Data

“Fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and enterprising attitudes” is documented by NSSE Senior Transitions module results...

- taking risks in courses without fear of penalty,
- inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions



One Institution's Value Story Using NSSE



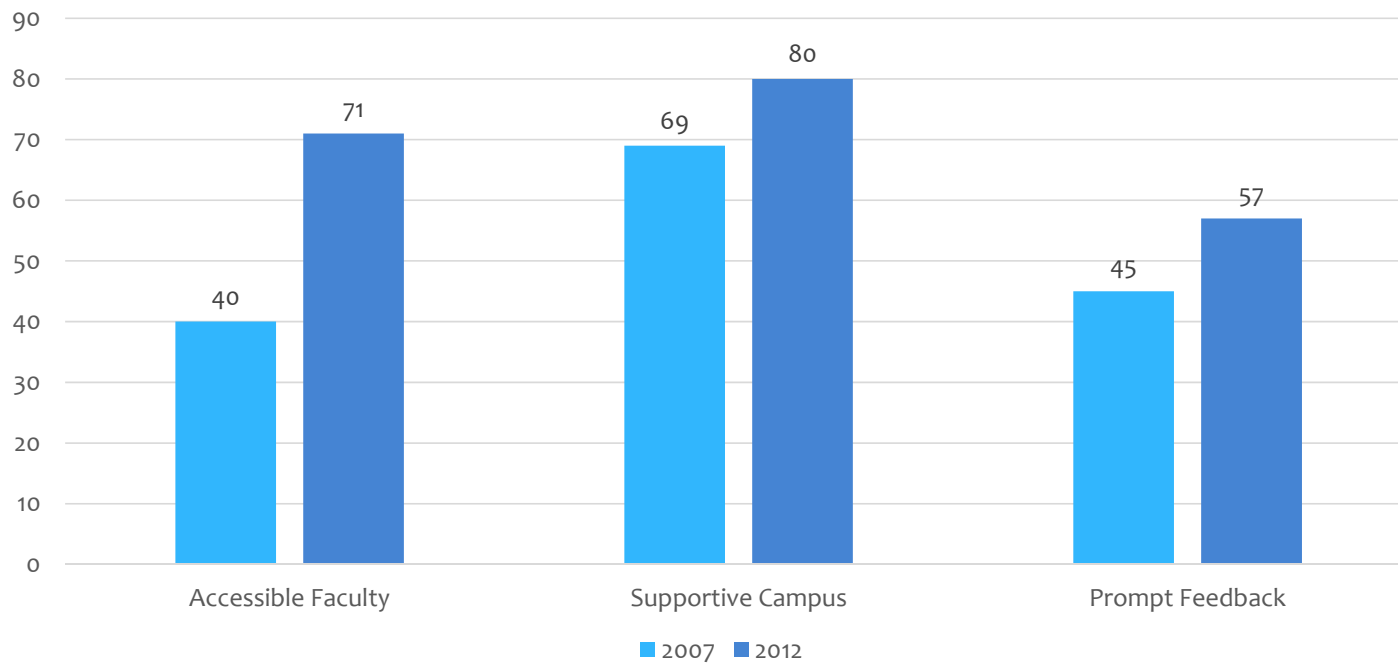
What Students Said About Advising

“Trying to figure out my major was hard, because I was not advised well at all.”

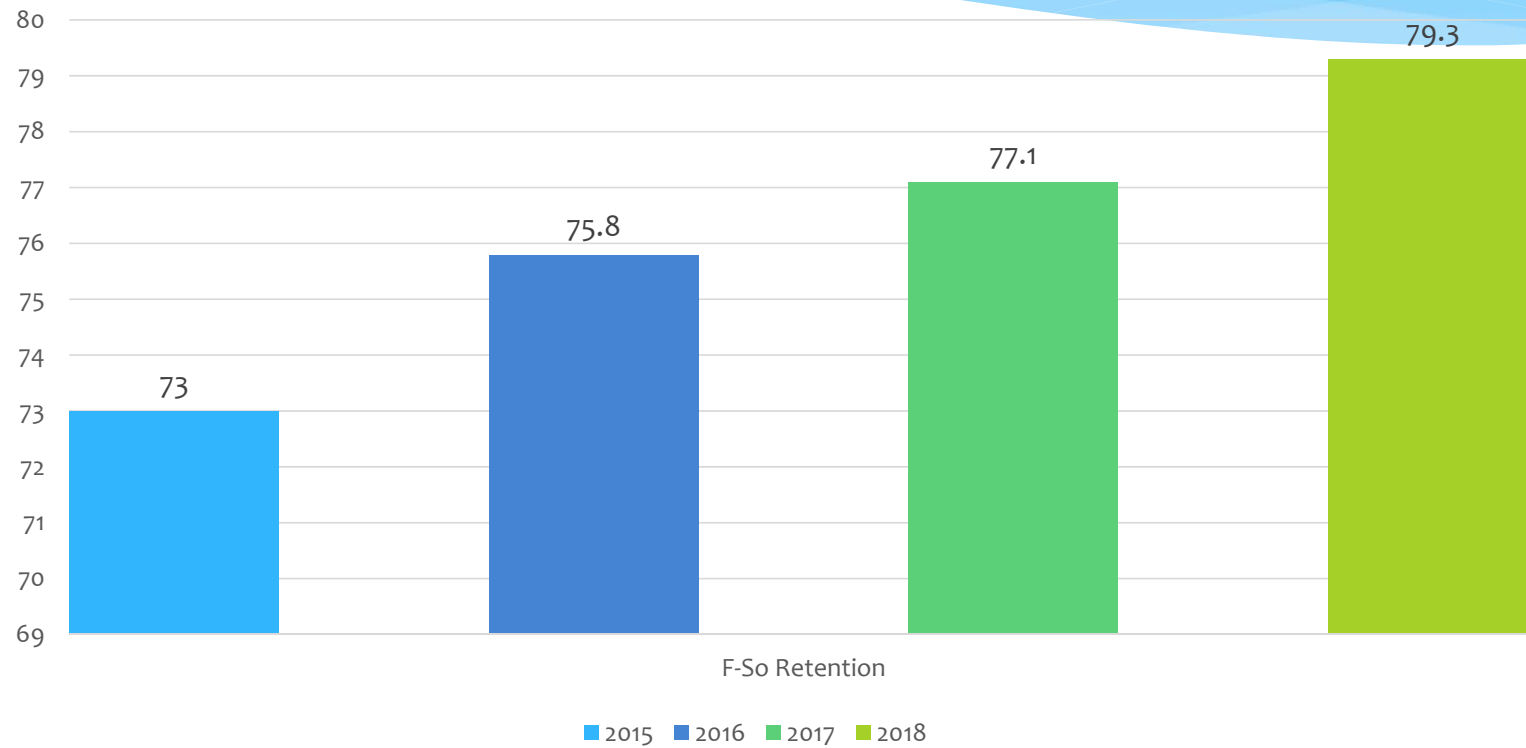
“I’ve seen my advisor only once all year; she causes me more stress than my schoolwork!”

Student Satisfaction: NSSE Comparison Data

Freshman Feedback



Retention Data (2015-18)



What Students Said About the LAC

“Taking the liberal arts core requirement, in addition to courses required in my major, makes it hard to complete a BA in four years.”


“There are too many general education requirements!”

Using NSSE Student Comments to Tell a Compelling Story

Optional prompts for open-ended comments at the end of the survey

- ☐ If you have any additional comments or feedback that you'd like to share on the quality of your educational experience, please enter them below.
- ☐ What has been most satisfying about your experience so far at this institution, and what has been most disappointing?
- ☐ Please describe the most significant learning experience you have had so far at this institution.
- ☐ What one change would you most like to see implemented that would improve the educational experience at this institution, and what one thing should not be changed?

Student Comments Enrich Numbers



I really appreciate how the College of Business partners with so many successful companies. Either through events like career fairs, the Boeing Case Competition, or a Lean Six Sigma practicum, I have been able to gain valuable interactions with business professionals.

SENIOR, Supply chain management

Student Comments Enrich Numbers

I really liked my freshman seminar which was part of a living-learning community. It was more than just a seminar, it was about life and how to live with others and consider others all while working on leadership.

SENIOR, Marketing



Student Comments Enrich Numbers

I think my most significant learning experience has been the undergraduate research I've been doing for the past three years as it ties into my course work and a career I want post grad.
SENIOR, Biochemistry



Student Comments Enrich Numbers

My most significant learning experience has been in the community. I did a service learning project with a community garden and learned a lot about social justice, sustainability, and leadership. I was provided with valuable skills that books cannot teach.

SENIOR, Finance



Crafting an Evidence-based Value Story Using NSSE Results



Lessons for Crafting a NSSE Data-Rich Value Story

- Start with your claims about student learning and educational quality and a specific audience in mind. *Use NSSE evidence to create stories to persuade a specific audience.*
- Blend numerical infographics with student quotes and images to bring the narrative to life.
- Consider telling a story of improvement by thinking about components of a good story: it's easy to read, introduces a problem, and shares how the problem was solved highlighting the role of the institution in addressing the problem.

Let's Practice: What Story Can you Tell about These NSSE Results?

NSSE's 10 Educational Gains	Percentage Seniors Responding "Very much" or "Quite a bit"
Thinking critically and analytically	84%
Working effectively with others	74%
Writing clearly and effectively	73%
Speaking clearly and effectively	69%
Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	68%
Developing or clarifying a personal code of values and ethics	65%
Understanding people of other backgrounds <small>(econ., racial/ethnic, polit., relig., nation., etc.)</small>	64%
Analyzing numerical and statistical information	64%
Solving complex real-world problems	64%
Being an informed and active citizen	58%

- **What kind of story are you telling? (compliance, improvement, problem, struggle, goal, tragedy, fantasy)**
- **Who is your audience and what do you want them to take away from this story?**

**What stories have you told with
NSSE results?**

What stories do we need to tell?

